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ABSTRACT

This trainer's guide is intended to assist supervisors of work-based career training projects in familiarizing students with different types of radio paging systems (bleepers) that are used in departments where staff spend a considerable amount of time out of the office. The guide is one in a series of core curriculum modules that is intended for use in combination on- and off-the-job programs to familiarize youth with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in the workplace. Included in the guide are the following components: project information, a summary of the content and approach of the guide, supervisor's notes, off-the-job tutor's notes, background information, lists of tasks and core skills, an action plan that includes suggested learning activities, supervisor and trainee review sheets, and an assessment form. (MN)

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Youth Training Scheme

CORE EXEMPLAR WORK BASED PROJECT

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E.T. phone home

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ESF
CORE SKILLS PROJECT
YTS

OTF No: 1

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ASSESSMENT OF CORE SKILLS

This series of projects contains a number of different formats for recording assessment of core skills. These formats are offered for experimental purposes; none is proven as the 'best' method. All are based on the principle that feedback to trainees is a necessary part of the learning process and that such feedback should include information on core skill development.

Further work is being carried out on the methods of assessing achievement of core skills in work-based learning and of how to log such achievement on a record which trainees can take away from YTS. Some of the results of this work will be included in later MSC/ESF Core Skills Project publications.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE WORK-BASED PROJECTS?

Work-based projects are learning materials which aim to make the most of all the possibilities for developing trainees' skills, knowledge and attitudes in the workplace. They build upon everyday workplace tasks to provide experience of the whole range of YTS learning opportunities.

The projects in this series have been tested with managing agents as part of the YTS Core Project, which is jointly financed by MSC and the European Social Fund. In some cases managing agents will be able to use the projects as they are. In others they will need to be adapted to the circumstances of a particular workplace or to the aims of a particular scheme. Some managing agents will prefer to produce their own projects. For such cases these examples aim to demonstrate some principles of good design in work-based learning materials. These principles are:

To encourage trainees to learn by doing.
To make the most of all the experiences which are available to trainees in the workplaces.
To start from a real task which is seen as relevant by all parties involved — trainees, workplace supervisors, trainers and off-the-job tutors.
To help trainees see the relationships between things learnt on- and off-the-job.
To base the assessment of achievement upon trainees' actual performance in tasks.
To look for all the opportunities for learning which arise from a task and, in particular, to help trainees to develop the core skills. These skills, in number, communication, problem-solving and practical activities, are used in a wide variety of tasks and are essential if trainees are to achieve competence in those tasks*. They are the skills — of finding out information, planning how to do things, overcoming difficulties and so on — which help trainees to learn more quickly in new situations, either in the same workplace, in a different one, or in the world outside work.

Such skills are required naturally by the workplace tasks in these projects and, in requiring trainees to go beyond the task itself, the projects deliberately *add* to the range of core skills which are required in an everyday working situation. This is especially important for some of the skills of communication and problem-solving which trainees are often not given the opportunity to exercise in work experience.

These principles can be incorporated in projects for all placements and for trainees of all ability levels. Although the projects in this series follow a common format, there is no single 'best' style. Nor is any special expertise in writing necessary. Good work-based projects can be produced by anyone who is determined to help trainees to exploit all of the potential for learning in work experience.

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*A technical manual Core Skills in YTS is currently available from MSC. It is supported by a short introductory leaflet and a practitioner's guide for supervisors. A separate manual is available on computer literacy/information technology.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was written for a trainee on the WEST MIDLANDS COUNTY COUNCIL'S YTS SCHEME, who was placed in the POLICE SURVEYOR'S DEPARTMENT.

The supervisor had, for several months, considered that a radio paging system might go some way towards solving the communication problems that always attach themselves to organisations where staff are frequently out of the office and difficult to contact. He had, however, found it impossible to find the time to investigate the different types of systems on the market, their cost, availablity, effectiveness etc.

This proved to be an ideal project for the section's YTS trainee.

It was given to the trainee about five months into his scheme, and as the project is quite complex, it is unlikely to work much earlier than this without excessive supervisor support.

It is worth remembering that trainees who are able and have demonstrated their abilities at work can frequently do this type of investigation and thereby make a real contribution to the efficiency of their section. Indeed, the type of problem which never reaches the top of the list of supervisor's priorities is often the kind of problem that can be readily tackled by trainees, with benefits to everyone concerned - the trainee gets a real, and important, job to do and learn from the supervisor gets a job done, or at least data collected; and the organisation often improves its efficiency. Any situation like this is ideal for a work-based project.

This project would easily adapt to any situation where an investigation was required perhaps on different suppliers or, as in this case, new technology and its acceptability to other workers.

SUMMARY

The trainee is asked to investigate different types of radio paging systems for use in a department where staff spend a considerable amount of time out of the office.

SUPERVISOR'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This work based project is designed to focus the trainee upon the CORE SKILL areas of: number; communication; practical skills, and problem-solving. Wherever possible, it is also designed to provide learning opportunities to improve personal effectiveness; to provide wider knowledge of the world of work and elsewhere; and to furnish the trainee with skills which can be transferred to other situations.

The essence of the work based project is that people learn more quickly and effectively by actually doing something.

The following notes are designed to help you, your staff, and the trainee, so that the project can be carried out with a minimum of disruption to normal work activity.

1. Where relevant, please advise other staff that the trainee will be doing the project;

2. Please ensure that the trainee has read the project details and understands what is required;

3. Please ensure that the trainee is aware of any aspects of safety, hygiene or security which might touch upon the project;

4. Please ensure that the trainee appreciates that good planning will make the task easier. Wherever possible, and before the project starts, the trainee should be encouraged to take responsibility for his/her learning by estimating time, deciding on equipment and materials, identifying possible hazards and other problems, and generally "thinking the project through".

5. Upon completion of the project discuss with the trainee the activities he/she has been engaged in. What problems were there? What has he/she learnt? Would he/she tackle the project differently?

Encourage the trainee to complete the trainee's review page.

For this project you may find the following information helpful:-

The trainee may experience some difficulty in finding out the names and addresses of suppliers. Rather than telling him/her, it would be better to try to point the trainee in the right direction first. Directories, for example might help.

If this feasibility study is to be taken seriously by staff, the letter accompanying the questionnaire might need the added weight of your signature. Explain the reasons for this to the trainee, and ensure that he/she drafts out the letter for you to sign.

This is a complex project which may need considerable support from you, especially if it is given to the trainee early on in his/her work experience. It does, however, have the considerable advantage of encouraging the trainee to find out more about the work of the section, especially its outdoors operations.

Ensure that the trainee is told the final outcome of the feasibility study. If it is adopted, it would be an interesting extension to allow the trainee to get involved with implementation.

If it is not, then the trainee should be told why.

Names

TRAINEE .....

SUPERVISOR .....

TUTOR .....

Times

Please fill in the table below. This will show the time you spend on completing this project. The first column has been filled in as an example. Make another table if you need more space.

DATE	16/6			
START	1.30			
FINISH	3.00			
TIME SPENT (HOURS)	1½			

BACKGROUND

It can be a frequent source of annoyance and occasional panic when out door staff cannot be contacted by their managers or administrators. You are asked in this project to carry out a feasibility study on radio paging systems to see if such a system might solve this particular problem.

SITUATION

WEST MIDLANDS COUNTY COUNCIL, POLICE SURVEYOR'S DEPARTMENT. Could be adapted to many office, retail, and other situations where you could carry out an investigation.

PURPOSES

This project asks you to investigate various suppliers of radio paging systems and to find out whether or not such a communication system would help office staff to keep in contact with staff who must visit other sites and, as a result, spend a lot of time out of the office.

Doing this project will enable you to learn more about the work of your section. It will also help you to develop your CORE SKILLS (number, communication, problem-solving, and practical skills). Increasing your abilities in these skills will make it easier for you to change jobs and retrain when the need arises.

The tasks you are asked to do are outlined below, together with the most important CORE SKILLS that they contain. When you have finished each task, ask your supervisor to tell you how well she/he thought you did in the task, and record this on the Assessment Form near the back of this Project. This record will be needed to complete your Certificate at the end of your YTS year.

WBP TASK	ACTIVITY	CORE SKILL
1.	Find out from your supervisor and other colleagues the extent of the problem.	Find out information by speaking to other people. 6.1
2.	Plot on a map of the area covered by your organisation (to scale) all the sites visited by staff and work out the distances involved, by interpreting the scale given.	Interpret scales dials and digital readouts. 2.3 Locate places by interpreting number, colour or letter systems. 2.5
3.	Write letters to suppliers.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams. 7.3
4.	Cost out 3 systems and compare their advantages and disadvantage.	Work out cost of goods and services. 1.5 Compare the relative costs and benefits of goods and services. 5.2
5,6 & 7	Design a questionnaire and recording form.	Plan how to communicate for a particular purpose. 9.5

	Distribute the questionnaire and enlist the co-operation of colleges.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams. 7.3 Ask other people in the work-place for assistance. 8.2
8.	Analyse information from the questionnaire and report forms according to categories, which you have decided to use.	Decide which category something belongs to. 10.2 Interpret numerical data or symbols in written or printed form. 2.1
9.	Present your findings to your supervisor in the form of a written report.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams. 7.3 Plan how to present information. 9.6

Each CORE SKILL is identified by number in the PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE to the YTS CORE, which contains advice and guidance on what CORE SKILLS are and their uses. The numbers are included here for ease of reference.

ACTION PLAN

TASK 1

When outdoor staff cannot be contacted by managers and administrators, the delays can be frequent and frustrating.

This project asks you to find out whether this problem causes your organisation more than frayed tempers and to investigate a possible solution.

Your first task is to find out from your supervisor the extent of the problem. For instance, how many members of the section's staff spend more than half their working week outside the office? What procedure exist for staff to report in to collect messages? How effective is it?

Make notes during your discussion.

Talk to other members of staff to try to get their opinions and ideas to improve the system.

This should give you a good initial understanding of the nature of the problem.

TASK 2

On a map of the County, plot all the sites visited by staff. Using the scale on the map, work out which is the furthest distance from the office. This will give you the range that any radio paging system must cover.

TASK 3

There are several companies that supply radio paging or "bleeper" systems. Get the names and addresses of five such suppliers. It may be necessary to do some initial investigation to track down suppliers.

Write to each one and explain the problem faced by your section, the number of staff involved, the distance travelled and anything else you think necessary. Ask them to send to you information and price quotations for suitable systems.

Draft out this letter carefully. Show it to your supervisor and get his/her comments together with permission to send the letter.

TASK 4

When you have the replies in from the suppliers, choose the three that seem to you to be offering the best deal.

Carefully cost out each system.

Compare the advantages and disadvantages as far as you can tell from the information you have. Decide which one seems to be offering the most competitive system, which will suit the needs of the section. Record this information neatly; it will be an essential part of your final report.

TASK 5

This next task asks you to investigate more fully the extent of the problem and to gain some idea of the needs of fellow workers, as far as this problem is concerned.

First of all design a short questionnaire that will be completed by the outdoor staff. Plan carefully how you are going to order the questions and the sort of information you will need to have, in order to make out a case for or against adopting a "bleeper" system. Show your questionnaire to your supervisor. Be prepared to accommodate his/her suggestions. It is also a good idea to try out a questionnaire on one or two people first to make sure the questions are phrased correctly to get the responses you want. This sort of exercise can be frequently ineffective because questions are misinterpreted.

TASK 6

Discuss with your supervisor the best way to distribute your questionnaire. Write an accompanying letter or note, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire.

TASK 7

In order to find out the extent of the problem, you will need to enlist the support of administrators and managers who might need to contact outdoor staff.

Design a simple but effective form on which colleagues can record the times they try to contact outdoor staff and fail, or have difficulties.

Show the form to your supervisor and gain his/her permission to use the form.

It may be necessary for staff to keep accurate records for 3 or 4 weeks so that you can gain a fair and realistic picture of the size of the problem.

Plan carefully how you might gain the co-operation of staff. Their help will be very important to the success of the feasibility study.

TASK 8

At the end of the test period gather in the information from office staff. Analyse the data carefully for the number of times delays have occurred. Information on the consequences of these delays would also be useful. You should also make arrangements to have the questionnaire from the outdoor staff returned. You might need to send our reminders about this. From this, try to find out what outdoor staff feel about the problem and its possible solution through the use of a radio paging system.

Plan how you are going to analyse this information. Decide upon the categories you will use and organise the responses accordingly. It is important to put responses into the right category and to be as consistent as possible in the way you interpret responses.

TASK 9

Organise all the information you have gathered during the course of this project (from suppliers, outdoor staff, administrators, managers etc.,) in the form of a written report to your supervisor.

You will need to plan your report carefully to give a thorough and reasoned case for or against the introduction of a radio paging system.

Your supervisor will need to decide upon the next steps to take. Ask him to let you know if the ideas and suggestions in your report get taken up. Remember it frequently takes a long time for decisions such as this to be made.

TRAINEE REVIEW

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE AND DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR AND TUTOR.

1. Were you offered a selection of Projects to choose from? If so, why did you choose this one?

2. What did you think of it? Was it - easy, hard, interesting or boring?

3. What did you learn? (Look at the list of Purposes).

4. Did you learn something which was not on the list of Purposes?

5. Did you need help with any particular part of the Project? What kind of help did you get?

6. Were there any words in the Project that you did not understand? Please list them.

7. Do you think you could use what you learned in another job, or outside work?

8. Has this Project helped you decide whether you need further training in certain areas?

SUPERVISOR REVIEW

Please refer to Supervisor's Notes.

Please read the questions included under Trainee Review.

Please complete the Assessment Form and discuss your assessment with the trainee before initialling it to show that you both agree with the assessment.

COMMENTS:

ASSESSMENT

explanatory notes

In completing this wbp the trainee has the opportunity to demonstrate competence in the CORE SKILLS listed on the attached form.

The first two columns list the wbp Tasks and the CORE SKILLS which occur within them.

You are asked to assess the trainee's competence in these CORE SKILLS according to the amount of support from you that the trainee needed, for example:-

1) if a trainee is asked to "find information from written sources" and you provide the trainee with all the sources of that information, together with telling the trainee where to look in any particular source, then that trainee is obviously being given much more support in finding that information than a trainee who identifies the sources and extracts correct information unaided;

2) if a trainee is asked to undertake a task which involves "noticing the needs of customers or clients", and needs considerable prompting to approach a customer, then that trainee is obviously being given more support than a trainee who takes the initiative in approaching the customer.

To be regarded as fully competent in the CORE SKILLS, the trainee should need to be offered no more support than you would normally give to any experienced worker.

Most of the time job competence and CORE SKILLS competence are likely to be the same, but sometimes this may not be so. For instance, a trainee involved in machining a particular component may be competent so far as planning the work is concerned (a CORE SKILL), but may not have reached experienced worker speeds (an occupational skill).

Please tick the appropriate box and initial in the space provided, after you have discussed your assessment with the trainee and agreed any further training required.

ASSESSMENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE E.T. PHONE HOME WBP NO M/01/110 DATE

TRAINEE'S NAME SUPERVISOR'S NAME

WBP TASK NO	CORE SKILLS ASSESSED	NEEDED A LOT OF ASSISTANCE	NEEDED SOME ASSISTANCE	LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE		COMMENTS INCLUDING NO OPPORTUNITY	AGREED INITIALS	
				NEEDS MORE PRACTICE	COMPETENT		TRAINEE	SUPERVISOR
1	6.1 Find out information by speaking to other people.							
2	2.3 Interpret scales dials and digital readouts.							
2	2.5 Locate places by interpreting number colour or letter sytems.							
3,5,6, 7,9	7.3 Provide information in writing and by means of tables and diagrams.							
4	1.5 Work out the cost of goods and services.							
4	5.2 Compare the relative costs and benefits of buying or using goods and services.							
5,6,7	9.5 Plan how to communicate for a particular purpose.							
5,6,7	8.2 Ask other people in the workplace for assistance.							

ASSESSMENT FORM continued.

WBP TASK NO	CORE SKILLS ASSESSED	NEEDED A LOT OF ASSISTANCE	NEEDED SOME ASSISTANCE	LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE		COMMENTS INCLUDING NO OPPORTUNITY	AGREED INITIALS	
				NEEDS MORE PRACTICE	COMPETENT		TRAINEE	SUPERVISOR
8	10.2 Decide which category something belongs to.							
8	2.1 Interpret numerical data or symbols in written or printed form.							
9	9.6 Plan how to present information.							